

Healthier Communities,  
Outstanding Care



Sherwood Forest Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Caring for your caesarean birth wound

**Information for women, birthing people,  
birthing partners and relatives**



**This leaflet is intended for patients who have already  
undergone a caesarean section. The information provided is  
applicable for after your surgery.**

# What is a caesarean birth?

A caesarean birth is an operation to birth your baby through an incision made in your stomach and womb, usually positioned just below your bikini line. This is usually around 15-20cm in length. Around one in four pregnancies result in a caesarean birth.

# Why do people have caesarean births?

Women have caesarean birth for many reasons, either by choice or for complications during vaginal birth. For whatever reason, your recovery should be the same.

# How long until I recover?

Generally, it takes around six weeks to recover from a caesarean birth, however, this will depend upon your individual situation, If your surgery had complications, or if you have other young children at home meaning you are resting less, you may feel you need more time.

Gentle exercise such as walking will help recovery, but avoid anything strenuous and ask for help when lifting heavy things. This includes, lifting prams and car seats.

# Looking after your caesarean birth dressing

The dressing to your wound will be removed on day two UNLESS you have a PICO dressing (PICO dressings are explained in detail later on in this leaflet).

Once your dressing is removed, clean and dry your wound thoroughly every day with **plain water (no soaps or oils)**. **Do not expose the wound to direct jets of water or soak it.** You may shower and allow the water to run on your wound; do not scrub or massage.

**Do not touch your wound unless it is necessary and you have thoroughly washed your hands.**

Contact the Sherwood Birthing Unit if you feel **unwell with cloudy/bright red weeping, foul smell, pus or opening of the wound, a temperature, excessive pain, or the wound is reddened and irritated.**

The sutures should dissolve by 3-4 weeks.

**Try to avoid wearing underwear where the banding has direct contact with the wound. Wearing loose fitting or high waist underwear is better.**

Between five and six weeks your wound should have healed into a scar, which will then gradually fade. You may find that you have an altered sensation in the close proximity of the wound, however, this will come back eventually.

## Caesarean birth skin wound closure

Your midwife will let you know before you leave the hospital if you have **absorbable stitches (Monocryl)** or if your stitches require removal (**Prolene beads**).

If your **stitches** require removal your community midwife will remove them for you. Your midwife will visit you at home five days after giving birth to remove Prolene beads.

If you had **staples** this will usually be taken out by your community midwife after five to seven days.

The wound with **surgical glue** closure (provides a protective covering) gradually peels off as the wound heals.

## PICO dressing

Your consultant surgeon will decide if you are to have a PICO dressing. They will select this dressing if you are at risk of a wound infection, for example a raised body mass index (BMI) or a long-term condition such as diabetes.

A PICO dressing is a negative pressure device, and has to stay on for a full seven days. After this time your community midwife will remove the PICO dressing and discard it along with the pump.

**Please note: Remove the batteries from the back of the pump before discarding. Care must be taken if children are around.**

Using a negative pressure dressing places the two sides of the wound under pressure, decreasing tension, removes any moisture, increases blood flow to the wound site and overall protects the injured area from getting dirty to ultimately help promote healing.

The PICO box is **NOT** waterproof, although the dressing itself is. When having a shower, unscrew the box from the dressing and put it in a safe place. Make sure the tube attached to the dressing is held out of the water and the end of the tube is pointing downwards so that water cannot enter the tube. After showering, reconnect and press the orange play button.

## Frequently asked Questions

### **Q. How do I know if the therapy is working correctly?**

A. The green OK light flashes when the pump is working correctly. The dressing should have a slightly wrinkled appearance and feel firm to the touch.

### **Q. Can I shower with the pump and dressing in place?**

A. No, you must first pause the pump and disconnect it from the dressing before showering. The dressing is water resistant, however, do not expose it to direct jets of water or soak it.

### **Q. Can I remove the dressing?**

A. No, this should be done by your midwife or doctor.

### **Q. How will I know if the batteries need changing?**

A. The green OK and orange (battery symbol) lights will flash together; replace with two lithium AA batteries.

### **Q. Why has the pump stopped working?**

A. The pump may be paused – press the orange button to re-start. Alternatively the batteries need to be replaced or the pump has stopped working after seven days of use.

### **Q. Who do I contact if the pump does not start or I have concerns?**

A. Please contact Sherwood Birthing Unit.

### **Q. How do I pause or re-start the pump?**

A. By pushing the orange button on the pump.

**Q. Why did the pump restart after I left it paused?**

A. If the pump is left paused for longer than one hour, it will automatically restart the therapy.

**Q. How will I know if the pump cannot reach the proper vacuum level?**

A. The orange (low vacuum symbol) light will flash. Check that the dressing is correctly connected to the pump and that the dressing seal is intact.



## Contact information

Sherwood Birthing Unit

**Telephone 01623 672244.**

## Further sources of information

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

## Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

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